

Star Wars Again

Noam Chomsky

The installation of a missile defence system in Eastern Europe is, virtually, a declaration of war. Simply imagine how the US would react if Russia or China or Iran or in fact any foreign power dared even to think about placing a missile defence system at or near the borders of the United States, let alone carrying out such plans. In these unimaginable circumstances, a violent US reaction would be not only almost certain but also understandable for reasons that are simple and clear.

It is well known on all sides that missile defence is a first strike weapon. Respected US military analysts describe missile defence as ‘not simply a shield but an enabler of US action’. It ‘will facilitate the more effective application of US military power abroad’. ‘By insulating the homeland from reprisal, [missile defence] will underwrite the capacity and willingness of the United States to “shape” the

country would be vapourized. The system is indeed aimed at Iran, but as a first strike weapon. It is a component of the escalating US threats to attack Iran, threats that are in themselves a serious violation of the UN Charter, though admittedly this issue does not arise in outlaw states.

When Gorbachev agreed to allow a unified Germany to join a hostile military alliance, he was accepting a very severe threat to Russian security, for reasons too familiar to review. In return, the US government made a firm pledge not to expand NATO to the East. The pledge was violated a few years later, arousing little comment in the West, but raising the threat of military confrontation. So-called 'missile defence' ratchets the threat of war a few notches higher. The 'defence' it provides is to increase the threat of aggression in the Middle East, with incalculable consequences, and the threat of terminal nuclear war.

Over half a century ago, Bertrand Russell and Alfred Einstein issued an extraordinary appeal to the people of the world, warning them that they face a choice that is 'stark and dreadful and inescapable: Shall we put an end to the human race; or shall mankind renounce war?' Accepting a so-called 'missile defence system' makes that choice, in favour of an end to the human race, perhaps in the not-too-distant future.